

# **RATE OF FIRE**

**The Newsletter of the Paddington Bears ASL Club**



**Issue 21**

**Summa 2002**

# *Rate of Fire*

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## *The Newsletter of the Paddington Bears ASL Club*

This newsletter is dedicated to the play of Advanced Squad Leader, and the players and news of the ASL community in Australia.

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I would also encourage players everywhere to take several copies to local game stores to be provided Free of Charge to any interested gamers.

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To make a submission, email your piece to me with minimum formatting. I will return with comments any item I feel needs more work. Otherwise I will edit as appropriate and include it in the next appropriate issue.

From time to time I will request players to write articles for the newsletter. Please consider these as “my last editorial demand” to paraphrase a famous German leader.

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# From the Editor

by The Editor

Well folks, 2003 is here, bringing with it the seven plagues - droughts, bushfires, plagies, George W. Bush, ....well you know what I mean. As a rogue state, armed with weapons of mass destruction, defying UN resolutions, prepares to attack Iraq, what does the year hold for ASL? Indeed, what happened in ASL last year?

## The Bearz

Last year actually saw a bit of a revival in the club, at least to my eyes. From the previous lows of 6 or 8 people turning up, this year saw a number of meets with 10 or more people. Indeed, one session saw 15 people swarming in to almost fill the room! A most welcome sign...maybe people's kids are getting older and they can escape more freely to their favourite hobby, although new ones are always on the way (Messrs Mitchell and Weiley note).

Notable amongst this was the intrusion (as some people saw it) of non-ASL games into the mix. I personally participated in several of these, playing and enjoying Paths of Glory and Barbarossa to Berlin. Also spotted were Wilderness War, Napoleonic Wars, History of the World, and a non-combat (gasp) MP family game called Puerto Rico.

Now, some of the krusty-dweebs amongst you might not appreciate this, but I personally think it's great, and in fact helpful in reviving the club. Certainly I appreciate playing different games, and I appreciate being able to play them at the club in a convivial gaming environmant. Equally the multi-player games provide a noise and excitement level not usually seen. The alternatives are here to stay, and long may they, and the Bearz, prosper - for they are linked.

## Publishing Fame

As you may have seen in the J4, another Bearz scenario has seen official print as J67, "The lawless Roads". A minor change with the reduction of three 37L ATG down to two, but what the heck. This makes at least four by my count (Men of the Mountains, Siam Sambal, and A Burnt-Out Case being the other three). At least we're getting out there - how many scenarios from Melbourne or Canberra have seen print (flame flame)?

## The Game

Looks like this year could see an explosion of product. Under development are numerous projects. OVHS and J4 have just come out, and we haven't even finished OWT yet! Surely to goodness Armies of Oblivion must emerge this year. Central Stalingrad is on the way (this year presumably). Ortona: Little Stalingrad is happening, although a bit further away, (see this issue) and the tractor Factory is happening. More Stalingrad - trying to recreate the brilliance that was RB? Wait and see. Doubtless there will be a J5 as well.

## Rate of Fire

Now a bit closer to home. The observant amongst you may notice that this issue of RoF is only 16 pages, following on from the (delayed) last edition of 16 pages also. A bit thin really. The really observant may notice that once the cover, contents page, editorial ravings, internet extracts, and Jim Mcleod's Ortona article are stripped away, all that remains is one (1) (ein) (uno) (une) article from a non editorial bear - Richard Weiley's review of SP8.

Now I know we are all busy with careers, children and other things, but RoF is only what we make of it. It needs contributions. It needs tournament reports, AARs, design notes on scenarios (Paul Seage please note) and anything else vaguely related. I'm not fussy. But neither will I go down the road of filling

*(Continued on page 15)*

# ORTONA: LITTLE STALINGRAD

## A PREVIEW

by Jim McLeod

Preview - Ortona: Little Stalingrad

During a recent email exchange with David Longworth, I was asked by David to write a preview of the upcoming HASL module I have designed. The battle depicted in this HASL takes place in Italy, an oft forgotten theatre of operations. The Allied attackers were Canadian and even in their own country, this battle has largely been forgotten. So don't feel bad if you've never heard of the Battle of Ortona, many Canadians haven't either.

The title of this HASL is "Ortona: Little Stalingrad." The title originates from the comparisons made by war correspondents reporting on the Ortona fighting, to the Battle of Stalingrad of the previous year. One story appearing in a newspaper stated, "For some reason the Germans are staging a miniature Stalingrad in Ortona,"; another described the fighting as, "identical to the fury of Stalingrad." In terms of scale, obviously there is no comparison between the battles of Stalingrad and Ortona. But in terms of intensity of combat, I am sure a German soldier who had survived Stalingrad would have been painfully familiar with the fighting in Ortona.

Given that this battle is rather obscure you may be asking yourself, "why is it being published by MMP?" Good question. I will try and address that question in addition to providing an overview of the Battle for Ortona. This article will touch on the following:

- Background
- The Combatants
- The Battle
- ASL and Ortona
- Conclusion

## BACKGROUND

Ortona is in the Abruzzi region of Italy on the Adriatic coast. Find Rome on a map, go straight east to the Adriatic and then north a wee bit. The city is said to have been founded by the Trojans after the fall of Troy and was a fortified stronghold of Venice when that city-state was a maritime power in the Mediterranean. During the 1920's and 30's, Ortona was a popular resort town and was known as the "Pearl of the Adriatic".

The city itself sits on a plateau. The "Terrevecchia", or "Old Town", is perched on a promontory surrounded on three sides by cliffs, steep ravines and the sea. These plateaus and ravines are typical of the area. Just to the north of the city proper is a large cemetery and ravine, to the south is the harbour and another deep ravine, on the easternmost point of the promontory is the medieval fortress overlooking the Adriatic. To the west is the relatively flat ground of the plateau with the Maiella mountain range in the distance.

With its deep water harbour and rail lines, (one of which ran under the north part of the city and emerged from under the fortress near the harbour) Ortona was a fairly important objective for the Allies. It would serve well as a rest and administrative centre. Many of the town's buildings are 3-4 story stone and masonry structures, many of which were over 500 years old. These buildings would provide fine billets for the soldiers who would spend the winter in the Ortona area. The immediate countryside was covered in vineyards, olive groves, crop fields, scattered woods and farm houses. The wartime population of Ortona was approximately 10 000 people but at the time of the battle many of them had fled into the mountains and surrounding countryside.

## THE COMBATANTS

The opposing sides at Ortona were the Canadian and German armies. Reinforced elements of the 2nd Infantry Brigade of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division were tasked with taking the town and two Fallschirmjaeger (FJ) battalions (II Bn, FJ Regiment III and II Bn, FJ Regiment IV of FJ Division 1) were determined to keep them out. Supporting 2nd Brigade's attack was the Trois Rivières Regiment (Armoured), the Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.) and various pioneer and anti-tank gun units.

The FJ were tough battle hardened troops whose reputation as "Elite" soldiers was well established by

this time of the war. In the battle for Ortona, the Fallschirmjaeger were well supported by their inherent battalion and divisional pioniere units. Both sides had ample artillery and mortar support on call. However, poor weather conditions and the close proximity of the opposing sides during the battle ruled out the use of close tactical air support during the fighting in the town.

The battle for Ortona took place from 20 to 27 December 1943 near the end of an offensive conducted by the British 8th Army that began in the last week of November. The 1st Canadian Infantry Division entered battle on 6th December and had been engaged in combat without respite since then. As a result, by 20 December most of the Canadian infantry battalions were tired and under strength. Especially taxing had been the fighting to clear the "Gully" and the capture of "Cider Crossroads". Battlefield conditions and the continual frontal assaults at the "Gully" were disturbingly similar to those of WWI.

The German paratroops on the other hand were relatively fresh having only been in the Ortona area since 13 December. FJ Division 1 was as close to full strength as a German unit could be expected to be at this stage of the war and were well equipped for the upcoming battle.

Worth mentioning at this time are the evaluations of enemy intent before the battle began by the higher commands of both sides. The Canadians thought the Germans would conduct a short delaying action before abandoning Ortona without much of a fight. Inland, the other brigades of the 1st Canadian I.D. were making slow but steady progress in outflanking Ortona. It was only a matter of time before the German position in Ortona would become untenable. The German higher command could read maps as well and presumed likewise. About 5 kilometres north lay an excellent defensive position on the Arielli River. It seemed obvious that the Germans would only conduct a brief delaying action at Ortona after which the Fallschirmjaeger would fall back to the next prepared line of defence. It appeared that no one wanted or expected a protracted fight in a built up area.

However, the men of the Fallschirmjaeger were a significant cut above the average German soldier. With their Fallschirmjaeger comrades reducing the Canadian advance to a crawl in the muddy country-

side west of Ortona, the men of II Bn, FJR III saw no reason to hand the city over to the Canadians without a fight.

## THE BATTLE

Prior to and during the battle, the Germans made extensive use of explosives in preparing their battlefield for the enemy. Predetermined "killing grounds" were given clear fields of fire; buildings were rubbed into the streets to block lines of enemy advance and provide cover for paratroopers shifting positions; a great many mines and booby traps were laid and strong points were selected and fortified. Initially, the German defenders deployed a single battalion in Ortona. Of that battalion only one rifle company (supported by machinegun, anti-tank and pioniere units) held the front line at any given time. The remaining FJ rifle companies were held in reserve.

When the front line rifle company was relieved, its men took shelter in the railway tunnel under Ortona. Sharing this tunnel with them were many civilians who chose to stay in the city. As the battle intensified, the divisional reserve (II Bn, FJR IV) was committed to the fighting on 24 December.

In the opening phase of the Canadian attack, the rifle companies of the battalions involved, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and "C" company of the Seaforth Highlanders Of Canada, were mostly at two-thirds to half strength. The strength of the rifle companies remained around fifty percent throughout the battle. Close support for the riflemen was provided by the machineguns and heavy mortars of the Saskatoon Light Infantry and the Sherman tanks of the Trois Rivières Regiment.

In the week of bitter street fighting that followed, the Canadians learned the finer points of urban combat the hard way. Faced with deadly bullet swept streets, Canadian pioneers developed "mouse holing". Using this tactic, they were able to advance up entire blocks of buildings without ever stepping foot in the streets. Tanks became mobile pillboxes providing invaluable fire support for the infantry. However, in this totally unsuitable environment, the tanks were always vulnerable to anti-tank guns, mines and sudden attacks by German paratroopers armed with grenade bundles or the new Panzerfausts and Panzerschrecks.

By 27 December, the paratroopers in Ortona were in danger of being cut off by the Canadian advance inland. Both sides were near exhaustion from seven days of constant struggle and during the night of 27/28 December, the Fallschirmjaeger withdrew from Ortona. At the time of their abandoning the city, the Canadians had captured approximately three-quarters of it's area. After the battle, much of the city lay in ruins. With the harbour badly damaged and the rail lines largely destroyed, the Allies had gained a shattered prize.

## ASL AND ORTONA

Now, what makes all this interesting in ASL terms and how is the battle unique to you the ASL player? From what you have just read, you are getting two "elite" formations bashing it out in stone buildings. Yawn ... Been there, done that, didn't get ROF. Lets look at the terrain first.

A glance at the map (34 by 67 hexes in size) will tell you that this is not just an urban battle. A good chunk of the map area is rural and the entire area of Ortona is depicted on the map. The approach battle will be conducted in the olive groves and vineyards outside of Ortona. Dotting the landscape here and there are stout farmhouses. If you wish to make a major push from the south early on, you may find out first hand why the Canadians lost so many men in taking the "Gully". And then there is the Mud.

Mud will slow the Canadian player down somewhat and make them more vulnerable to enemy fire. However, the Canadians have ample Smoke assets on hand. Smoke usage in Mud you say?! You bet. There is overwhelming historical documentation that smoke was in fact used to great effect during the extremely muddy conditions around Ortona.

Once you are through the rural area and have broken into the town, you will notice that this is no ordinary "ASL" city. The majority of buildings in the main built up area of Ortona are Rowhouses. This is where the "mouse holing" comes into play. Unlike "A Bridge Too Far", mouse holes can be created during play by a variety of means. And then there is the cobblestone. No mud between these building and the extra -1 DRM for certain fire attacks is an added stick in the eye for whomever is on the receiving end. Same goes for infantry moving in a Piazza. Don't forget to look both ways before you cross.

There should also be a good amount of Rubble present on map. In the CG, a creative German will use his ability to rubble buildings in order to channel the Canadian attack into his "killing grounds." It is also likely that the rubble will be mined so take care of those Pioneers. When they aren't busy mouse holing, Pioneers will be useful in clearing lanes through mine strewn piles of rubble. Mining rubble is permissible per O:LS SSR.

Some walls rise to new heights in Ortona in the form of High Stone Walls (HSW). HSW's are a 3/4 level LOS Obstacle and they impart a far different effect on game play than their lower level cousins. HSW's are more like Bocage in their effect on LOS but not as severe. Judging by the photographic evidence, the actual walls were 3-4 metres in height. In many ways, as the attacker, your first obstacle is the terrain itself. And then there are the Germans to contend with.

The Fallschirmjaeger were a true "Elite" formation. Highly trained, aggressive, bold and experienced in combat, the Fallschirmjaeger were arguably the best soldiers in the German Army. In the O:LS HASL, the FJ appear as 5-4-8 squads with Assault Fire and Spray Fire. They also have underlined Morale, an ELR of 5 and a broken side morale level of 9. The HS is a 2-3-8. The FJ are treated as Elite for purposes of C8.2.

A quick peruse of the German order of battle indicates that it is all infantry but, they have plenty of firepower. In addition to the expected high allotment of MG's, the FJ have a good selection of Guns (81mm Mortars, 75mm Infantry Guns, 75mm Anti-Tank Guns and 20mm AA Guns) and Artillery (80mm and 120mm OBA). The FJ Pioniere are also on hand with plenty of DC's and the always fun to use FT's.

The Canadians are not considered to be an "Elite" formation although many of their squads will have a morale level of "8". When purchasing Infantry RG's in the CG, a DR is made on the "Canadian Infantry Quality Chart". The results will see you with anything from 4-4-7 squads to 4-5-8 squads in the rifle platoons. Your squad ELR will also be dependant on the class/type of squad the RG receives.

In terms of firepower, the Canadians have a hard time matching German output. As with other Common-

wealth units, the rifle companies were equipped with light infantry weapons. However, the firepower gap is narrowed somewhat when the tank and artillery support is taken into account.

With HASLs, the scenarios give you a taste of the main course that is the CG. The CG is the crown jewel of the package, at least it is in my opinion. In the O:LS HASL there are three CG's. CGI covers the approach battle from 20 December AM to 22 December PM (6 CG Dates); CG II takes up the battle inside the built up area of Ortona and goes from 23 December AM to 25 December PM (6 CG Dates); and, my personal favourite, CGIII is the entire battle, 20 December AM to 27 December PM (16 CG Dates).

Of note for the Germans in CGIII is the limited number of rifle platoons that they may purchase over the first 8 CG Dates; only seven platoons. This is meant to reflect the fact only one FJ battalion was in Ortona for the first four days of the battle. With this limited number of rifle platoons initially available, force management is key for the German player. Although that fact may imply that the German side will be on a purely defensive footing, the reality is otherwise. Given the high quality of the Fallschirmjaeger and nature of the terrain in which the fighting takes place, there are many opportunities for the Germans to counter-attack.

For the Canadian player, there is no restriction for rifle platoon purchases but there is for tank troop purchases. Historically, only one squadron of the Trois Rivières was active in battle at any given time. Therefore, a RG purchase note won't allow the Canadian player to purchase the tank troop RG if they currently retain a certain number of tanks in the RePh.

Back to the infantry for a moment, just because there is no purchase limit for a given time frame, the Canadian player must plan for the end-game. If you shoot your infantry bolt early in CGIII, you will come up short when it matters most. The CG uses a blend of Red Barricades, KGP/PB mechanics. CG scenario VC's are similar to RB while the perimeter determination method is like that of KGP/PB. Other RePh mechanics follow very closely those that are becoming "standard" MMP RePh mechanics.

Squad density in CG III averages around 14-20 squad equivalents for the German player and 20-34 squad

equivalents for the Canadian player. However, the actual number of squads will vary depending upon your fortunes in any given CG scenario. CG scenario playing time will also vary, but mine have averaged between 6-8 hours of playing time, not including setup time.

I hope that you the ASL player will find the variety in the Campaign Games to your liking. Having ground through CGIII, oh ... lots, I still find it to be a blast! Then again, I am a tad biased. :) For scenarios, the count is currently at eleven with a twelfth in the offing. The actual number that will make the final cut is not yet certain. The scenarios include actions from all parts of the battle and will serve as good primers for familiarizing oneself with the O:LS SSRs and new terrain rules. Scenario size ranges from tournament sized small to medium offerings to some larger actions for those who like 'em big.

## CONCLUSION

As far as a new ASL product goes, the Ortona: Little Stalingrad HASL should be fairly user friendly if you have played either Red Barricades, Pegasus Bridge or KGP. "Rule shock" is fairly low with nothing too unfamiliar included that needs to be chewed, digested and retained. The map itself (I've seen the colour proof) has a wide variety of rural and urban terrain. Oh, and by the way, it looks ooooooh so cool! The scenario playtesters seem to be enjoying the scenarios they are working on and I can give you my biased opinion of the CG. It is great fun and it's scope is very manageable as the CG scenarios play more like "large" scenarios.

I often refer to the O:LS CG as "RB Light". Having said that, you will find nothing "light" about the cardboard action in O:LS. You will have a challenging and entertaining ASL experience fighting over the vineyards and through the olive groves of the Italian countryside, on into the city of Ortona; or, from the other side of the hill, trying to halt the inexorable Allied advance north with limited, but high quality, resources.

Taken together, perhaps the above explains why MMP has decided to invest its time and resources into this largely unknown battle in a campaign fought by soldiers who were once referred to as the "D-Day Dodgers". It is going to be a whole lot of ASL gaming fun! And, along with the gut wrenching cardboard

battle action, you just might learn a little something about the Canadian contribution to the Allied effort in Italy during WWII. All in all, not a bad deal.

If you want to learn more about the Battle for Ortona, please check out the following website:

<http://www.tv.cbc.ca/national/pgminfo/ortona/>

## **McGILCHRIST'S BANE - A REVIEW OF SCHWERPUNKT 8**

**(Or why I believe investing in boards 48-52 early was a good idea)**

**by Richard Weiley**

My theory regarding the last two Schwerpunkt releases is that they are strongly influenced by the fact that their release dates coincides so closely with Oktoberfest. What I mean by this is that this set represents your basic meat and potatoes ASL that appeals in that open style of tournament. I don't think you will find many classic scenarios in this pack but if you just want to sit down and play some solid ASL this product represents a good buy.

What you don't find a lot of is

- PTO or desert actions;
- Use of chapter E (e.g. night rules, river crossings and other fiddly stuff); or
- Early war actions.

What you will find in Schwerpunkt 8 is that you get a reprise of the fairly successful formula applied to Number 7. In summary, twelve scenarios which are predominantly;

- medium sized tournament actions;
- covering the mid to late war period;
- featuring combined arms actions; and,
- focused on the eastern front.

Schwerpunkt also don't shy away from using several of the somewhat controversial boards 48-52, controversial because as yet they haven't been released as part of a 'core' module. Although they are available for sale separately as parts.

By now the Schwerpunkt format is familiar to all veteran ASL'ers. You get the standard booklet with designer notes on each of the 12 scenarios, fleshed out with a couple of game related articles and an editorial from Evan Sherry on the state of ASL. What follows is a brief description of each of the scenarios for those who haven't yet taken the plunge.



SP 85 - The McCown Encounter. Bulge scenario utilizing boards 11 and 4. The US defends with an elite infantry force featuring a 10-2 and 50 cal., supported by a couple of tank destroyers. Kampfgruppe Peiper is on the attack with a full panzer-grenadier company loaded on no less than 15 half-tracks. The Germans must exit 62 points to win.

SP86 – Bridge at Stavelot. Same date and still in the Ardennes. Another elite US force (this time featuring a 9-2 and 50 cal.) defends the board 41 village against KG Peiper (another outing for the black counters). The US gets some 76L ATGs and a couple of M16 ‘meatchoppers’ that remain on board for a limited period. The German infantry assault is backed by Panthers and PzIVHs.

SP87 – Fangs of the Tiger. Features an ‘unreleased’ board (No. 49). A small Soviet blocking force buttressed by 5 T43s and an ATG is defending against a German counter attack spearheaded by 4 Tigers in January 1944. The Germans must 9 VP, including one Tiger to win. The Russians get a sixth T43 and a lend lease M3 Lee as reinforcements.

At the time of writing this was one of the three scenarios in the set I had played. The game certainly left me with the impression that the T43 is an inferior vehicle to the standard T34, however the Lee’s 37LL gun is an excellent weapon for getting critical hits on Tigers in tight situations, just ask Dave L. A reasonable scenario but the restrictive Russian setup restrictions and the use of an impassable (for vehicles) stream that channels the German attack would seem to limit its replay value.

SP88 – Race for the Sarvis. Hungary, January 1945. Looking for another scenario featuring a King Tiger v. IS 2 matchup? Well this one won’t disappoint. Five IS-2m’s and a solitary IS-2 supported by 6 squads take on 8 Tiger II’s. That’s not a typo! You’ll need two copies of Beyond Valor to play this baby. This battle takes place on boards 23 and 49. The German wins by having more GO vehicles north of the board 23 canal at the end of the game. To spice things up the Russians have a set DC, virtually guaranteeing that they can drop one of the three crossing points into the river on the first turn. They also have three additional DC’s to try their luck with on the remaining bridges. If they get really frisky the infantry is also armed with two panzerfausts that they

can use on their former owners.

This is the second scenario from the set that I’ve played. It’s an entertaining game but like all of it’s predecessors featuring the King Tiger v. IS2m it becomes a bit like an ASL version of Wheel of Fortune - “I’d like to buy a turret hit please”.

SP 89 – Assaulting Tes. Tes is a town in Hungary. Once again its 1945 and this time it’s the Hitlerjugend division on the rampage. Spearheaded by 4 Jagdpanthers, the SS are also traveling in style even at this stage of the war as they are accompanied by no less than 10 assorted halftracks, including the German version of the ‘meatchopper’, the SPW251/21. Unfortunately for those of you who get an illicit thrill out of leading your black SS legions into the righteous struggle against the Bolshevik horde, the 251/21 is not available in basic black – you’ll have to make do with the blue I’m afraid.

The SS will not have things all their own way however. The elite Russian infantry force has its own 50 cal. (only a 9-1 for direction I’m afraid) along with 5 tanks and SP guns. The Russki’s also get a 120mm OBA battery (with plentiful ammo and an offboard observer - I think even I could get at least one mission down from this module!) and also get to use panzerfausts as if they were 1944 Germans.

This scenario features boards 48 and 50 which apparently bear no resemblance to the actual terrain of the battlefield. Evan Sherry informs me that this board combination was selected solely to piss off Mark McGilchrist.

SP90 – Skirting the Mace. Normandy 1944 and this time the Hitlerjugend are trying to break out of the Falaise pocket. However a determined force from the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Armored Division occupies a vital hill dominating their line of retreat (even more unfortunately this hill is located on board 50!). As you would expect exit VC apply here. Feel free to break out the black counters!

SP91 – Show a Little Guts. One of the two PTO designs in this set. A US Army unit defends against a Japanese attack on the island of Eniwetok. The US is supported by two gun armed halftracks. Features boards 35 and 38.

SP92 – Seelow Seesaw. Total late war madness on

the Eastern Front. 3<sup>rd</sup> Shock Army takes on the Seelow Heights with 31 squads and 13 AFV's, including Schwerpunkt's version of the OT-34/85 flamethrowing tank. However, the game will be no picnic for the Soviet armour as in addition to all the usual threats posed by later war Germans their arsenal also includes an 128L ATG, as well as a number of nasty 338 infantry tank killer detachments. As if this wasn't enough on turn 4 the cavalry appears for the Germans in the form of 'elements of SPG training Brigade 920' with 5 assault guns and as many 548's. Boards 18, 9 and 44 provide the setting for this carnage.

SP93 – Oder Bound. January 1945 and the 'Kurmark' Panzergrenadier division is getting in the face of a Guards Tank Brigade from 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Tank Army. Novel on a couple of counts; (1) the Soviets actually outnumber the Germans in the number of AFV's (9 T34/85's v. 4 Hetzers) and; (2) the prime mode of transport for the Russian infantry are lend leased British universal carriers. The Germans do outnumber the Soviets in infantry and have a number of artillery pieces in support, including an 88L flak gun. In addition to the carriers the Soviets also get an M17 GMC, the lend lease version of the 'meatchopper'. Boards 17 and 35 are used for this encounter.

SP94 – Out of Order. Played on half of board 22, I've lost count of the number of scenarios that focus on some aspect of the German raid on Tito's headquarters at Drvar in 1944. SS paratroopers, Brandenburg commandos, and some Bosnian auxiliaries take on elements of the Marshal's Headquarters Company and Escort Battalion. The Germans win by ensuring that there are no partisans within building 22F3 at game end. Aaron Cleavin has said that this was a popular choice at Oktoberfest.

SP95 – Burn Gurkha Burn! Yes, you guessed it, the sequel to Die Gurkha Die! from SP7. Sees the Japanese 33<sup>rd</sup> Division taking on Gurkhas of the Indian army outside Prome in March 1942. Japanese 448's equipped with 2 flamethrowers and a couple of DC's ensure that this game will live up to its title at some stage. I recall seeing it being played at a recent Bearz day and the comments were generally favourable. Uses those old PTO standby's - boards 36 and 37.

SP96 – Husum Hotfoot.

Its April 1945 and we're back in Germany for a scenario that could have been an outtake from *Time on Target* issue #2. Elements of 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division take on remnants of a German Marine Division and the 12th SS Replacement Battalion. The Reich is finally running out of steam as the combination of 447 troops with an ELR 2 means you will probably see a number of conscripts generated who are eager to join the POW procession down the nearest autobahn. German leadership is average although they do get a full set of MG's, a couple of 'shrecks' and an 81mm mortar to aid the defence.

The Brits assault across board 37 into the board 10 village with 11 squads backed up by 5 AFV's including 2 Comets and 2 of the dreaded Wasps.

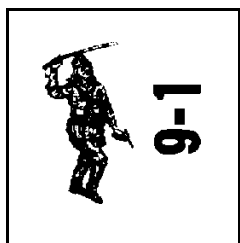
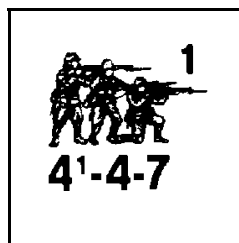
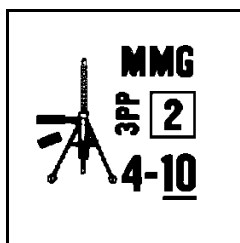
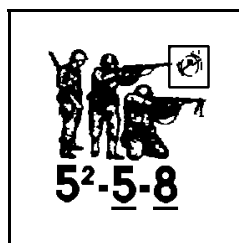
This was one scenario where going by the designer's suggestions could really get you in to trouble. His advice for the German defence focused on contesting the three choke points on board 37. This definitely didn't work in the game I played, where a forward German defence faced a carrier blitz down the British right flank on turn 1. The Germans never recovered and few defenders made it back to the village in the face of the mobility provided by the British carriers. However it is tough to keep a good Nazi down as the final good order German squad proved by battle hardening twice on consecutive CC PPF shots against overrunning WASPs.

Seems to me the defender is better off forming a mutually supporting defensive nut based solidly in the village at start and force the British player to risk the Wasp's to break into the position. Multi location firegroups might then have a chance to inflict STUN results on the carriers which will deprive the attacker of a large proportion of his firepower.

So there you are, if you're into the MIB, 50 cal's., King Tigers, boards 48-50, 'meatchoppers' and/or late war mayhem in general, there is sure to be something in this set for you. To my mind issue 8 doesn't quite reach the same standard as issue 7, but then that set was probably the best set Schwerpunkt has released.

# OPERATION WATCH-TOWER

by David Longworth



This article will look at some of the scenarios and the CG included in Operation Watchtower, the HASL module released about 12 months ago. Rather than a detailed review, I will simply give some first impressions and discuss the scenarios I have actually played.

First up, first impressions. Skipping past the cover art, the module looks good. I like the historical study concept, with a mix of historical and geomorphic maps for variety. Lots of counters – raider marines, paramarines – every kind of marine under the sun. More marine squad types than the Soviet army now. Campaign rules. Plenty of scenarios. More Jap units – for those of us who have bought BRT as well, the most numerous squad type in our counter mix must be the Jap 4-4-7. Tenno haika banzai!

The map is an interesting one. Leaving aside the issue of the misprinted elevation level colours, which has been rectified since, it looks great. Quite big, with large hexes. Lots of jungle, using the Nhum

Gha paradigm of light jungle on the outside with dense jungle patches, with a big bald ridge sticking up out of it complete with a few abrupt elevation changes. I'm always struck by the difference between the historical maps and the geomorphic maps. Must be a message there somewhere – let's face it, we still don't have a realistic European village board – they all look like American garden suburbs. Anyway, on to the scenarios.

## HS8: Bailey's Demise

This scenario depicts an action where the US troops are attempting to seize a bridge (well actually a log over a creek) with a small Jap force trying to hold them off. Two half boards, 12 5-5-8's led by a 9-2 take on 8 4-4-7's led by a 9-1. Not many SW of note, and the only game affecting SSR are one stopping the Japs crossing the bridge on T1, and no bore sighting for the Jap. Actually the same action as the old ASLUG scenario 'One Log Bridge'.

Well, I had the defenders against Mark McGilchrist and set up what I thought was a reasonable defence, and managed to wax a squad in the initial rush. Unfortunately I hadn't set up enough guys in the area around the board join, so on his second turn he was able to push through my DFF and advance to a position where he could fire on the bridge. As a result I couldn't get across for a late game hold out and so he was able to roll me up with no time pressure whatsoever.

Not a bad scenario, but the Japanese must MUST set up lots of guys around the 34Y1/Z1/AA1 area to stop the bridge being interdicted so he can get the rest across the bridge to hold out. If he doesn't then he will certainly be overwhelmed on the east side of the creek. I can't see any other to play it. This scenario has all the hallmarks of having been play tested 25 times and being balanced for a totally optimised defense. Heaven help the Jap if he doesn't work it out and get it exactly right on his first

playing. Replay value consists of one playing to see how it plays and then once more to get it right.

**Verdict:** Probably even if the Jap gets the perfect defense first time up sight unseen. Most of us won't.

### **HS1: First Matinakau**

Played as a series with Richard Weiley along with Sand Spit, as the both use the same board and overlays (lots of them). We agreed to take the same side in both scenarios, so I was the US both games. This one features about 10 Jap squads, mostly 2<sup>nd</sup> line or conscript with few SW or leaders, against a two pronged assault by US. Four squads set up on the far side of the sand bar as a pinning force, while the 11 squad manoeuvre element sweeps in from the flank. Most of the US are 4-5-8 bolt-action dudes. Only real SSR is an extra HIP for the defender.

This one lasted all of three turns. I honestly can't see what the Jap can do in this one. Totally outnumbered and outgunned, and most of their troops are non-stealthy limiting the chances of a CC mass kill. The 8 morale marines mostly in light cover are tough to get rid of, and if they stick together and use the 7 turns to go the 9 hexes they need to cover, not much the Jap can do to stop them. Even a CC kill or two won't be enough. US has way too much time and material.

**Verdict:** Back to the kennel, schweinhund!

### **HS11: The Sand Spit**

Features the well known action where a large Japanese force of men and tanks tried to force their way across the Matinakau sandbar at night. In the face of massed artillery, machine gun and anti tank fire it turned into a bloodbath reminiscent of the Somme or Passchendale.

Features a large Jap force (20 squads and 9 tanks –

cool) against a small US force with only 6 squads, but good things to use i.e. an HMG, two 37LL, a 75-armed HT, mines, trenches, wire, and a 1-800 toll free connection to the 105mm call centre.

Set up a fairly standard line, with guys dug in along the jungle edge, wire across the sandbar, mines behind, and tubes set up to cover the crossing area. An MMG placed to the side for a bit of fire lane action across the sandbar.

In the event most of this was to no avail. The OBA red-carded without landing even a spotting round. Both of the 37LL guns broke down, one on it's first shot, while the other destroyed one tank before malfunctioning out. In the absence of OBA or effective AT fire, Richard's asiatic horde swarmed forth like killer bees to head for the distant airfield, changing history in the process.

**Verdict:** Who knows? Not the Youse-house playtesters – they probably re-rolled all the bad events in accordance with their usual practice.

### **ER Campaign: Bloody Ridge**

Last but not least, the Big Kahuna. Looks nice and playable, with limited numbers of troops, only five CG dates, and a fairly limited core area. This was played against my nemesis, the evil Paul Seage. We agreed that he would be the attacker and I would take the many brands of Marine defending the hill.

For the set up, the US receives 4 infantry platoons, a mixed SW platoon, a 105 module, and some fortifications. To this I add an MMG platoon for extra FP, and another 105 OBA module. The defense is pretty standard: foxholes, trenches and most of the guys on the level 4 hexes, wire immediately in front, a few squads down in the jungle to guard the west flank with a bit of extra wire.

Paul buys extra infantry as one would expect and on

his first turn swarms into the jungle and up to the edge. Not within NVR and no weird straying results, and no action. My first turn follows, with the only event of note being an NVR decrease down to 1 – not good.

Paul's second turn follows, with the NVR promptly being rolled down to 0! And I haven't even spotted him yet. The horror. Taking advantage of this turn of events, the Japs swarm up the hill unseen and start burrowing through the wire without anything to stop them while others rush around the base of the hill. When the firing finally begins, the marines have a sea of concealed Japs adjacent to them with MG fire streaming up from the base of the hill. As well, a pre-registered OBA module starts hammering down right in the middle of the Marine position.

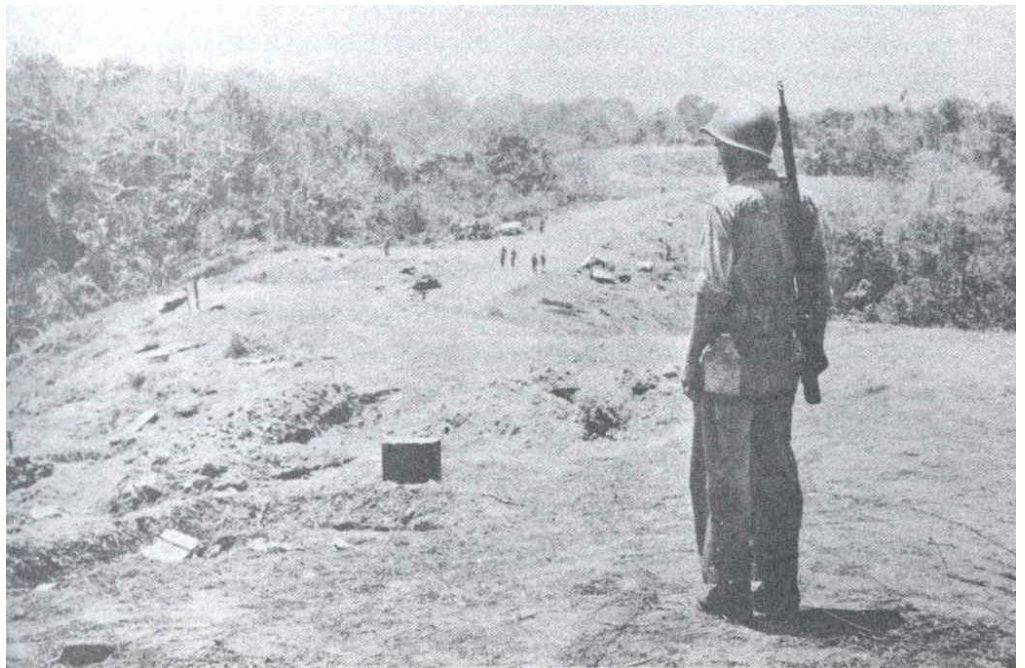
Under this pressure, the defense gradually turns into a mass of broken guys crawling from foxhole to foxhole while Japs filter in unchecked. The guys down in the jungle have no freedom of movement and are not involved in the battle, nor will they be. The OBA hammers down while the US modules fail to do any damage, eventually the field phones are overrun. Suffice to say that about four squads and a 9-2 manage to tumble back to the northern end of Hill 100 and survive the rout, along with 6 squads from the jungle line.

For the day date, I buy two setup rifle platoons – no time to bring people in. An OBA module, some FPPs, and an FPF mortar barrage complete the buys. I set up a nut on Hill 120 with the FPF barrage laid down right across the front of the hill.

However, this ain't enough. The FPF barrage deters

a frontal attack, so he works around the sides chasing away the flankers while the hill over with heavy firepower. I only have one MMG to reply with at any decent range. Eventually he works his way up onto the ridge and whales on the defenders at point blank range. With the hill overrun, no defenders left, and no chance of re-taking the hills, the campaign is over.

**Verdict:** Hard to say, because of the two NVR rolls



that effectively ruined the CG. Might be a little tough for the US facing an intelligent Jap, but probably needs a more representative playing.

# Nutz On The Net

## More ranting from the InternUt!!

Listerz;

<Trev> >> Even in friendly games I play "if you forget it you forgot it," to such  
>> things as the first rally, SMOKE, OBA , voluntary breaking (at the start > of  
>> the RtPh) and apply it to both sides. Has improved my play over the > years.  
>> I will still occasionally forget my OBA if tired, but being strict will > help  
>> your play not hinder it.  
<TR> Yuck...doesn't sound like a very friendly game.

Sure it does. Nothing wrong with playing correctly.

<TR> >> To what end are you wanting your play "improved"? So that you can win every game? Become a \_World Champion\_ ASL player? Here is a clue...even if you become a \_World Champion\_ ASL player you will still be a \_geek\_ like the rest of us!!! I don't play this way...if my opponent forgets his self-rally I will let him roll it \_IF\_ it still doesn't really matter. If my opponent takes one maybe two Preps then remembers he wanted to place some smoke, I \_MIGHT\_ let him do it...same for OBA. Sure, it is a judgement call and the rules of the road are that one's opponent has finally say on whether to allow you to \_go back\_. The bottom line for me is fun and I have much more fun with a casual style than otherwise...it is just a game after all.

OK Tate, just when is it acceptable or not to allow the above? If you are kicking butt it is fine and when things are close it is not? If you play sloppy once WRT SOP then play sloppy all the time. Try and be consistent. Don't let things like the current status of the scenario or who you are playing decide how sloppy you play. Lets say that buddy forgets his self rally on turn 1 and you let him do it half way through the PFPh. Fine. Now it's the last turn, his player turn and he wants to do his self rally in the PFPh again. If he gets it he can run that squad off map to win. You will let that go as well? If you don't you're an ARAh Tate and if you do let it go you are a sap. The best course is to disallow it to begin with and then there are no disagreements. Your forgetful opponent should catch on after the first instance and will not

repeat the error a second time. If he does, he deserves to lose. The guy just ain't learning.

<TR> >> I have played strict players and I am willing to go along \_BUT\_ if that is the way you want to play then I will do my best to give it to you as hard as possible. The problem with playing this way is that the game usually degenerates into a contest of rules knowledge and less of a match of tactical skill.

I disagree Tate but anyway ...

<TR> >> Just seeing who has a better grasp of the ASOP just doesn't hold a lot of interest for me.

It's called knowing how to play the game Tate.

<Trev> >> If however I see that an opponent has not done something, like left a > squad >> unrallied, and I've spotted it I'll usually keep asking him whether he > is >> sure he wants to proceed to the next phase until he spots it.

<TR> >> I would just tell him...I mean what is the real point of playing?!?! Good point, buddy rolls a 12 loses to a CVP cap or x's out his MA and has his AFV Recalled, and calls you a #\$\$%&\*%\$! Best to say nothing and let the other guy play his game. But second guessing a guy's motivations for keeping an OT AFV BU is none of my business. I would agree on this...my opponents \_dumb\_ (yet legal) moves are not my responsibility.

Neither is reminding him; to rally units, repair weapons, when fire smoke, declare an OVR \_before\_ he enters your hex etc., etc., etc. ...  
=Jim=

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The Tater Scrote wrote:

>Consider that the average annual encounters per  
> year is 61 for adults...for married couples it is 112.  
I am happy to say  
>that I am above average.

List content has reached a new low--Tate bragging about his sex life!

There are some things I just don't want to think about.

Ychhh.

Todd Lewis  
Fayetteville, AR

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Original Message ----- From: Roar Admin  
<RoarAdmin@jrvdev.com>  
To: <advanced-sl@multimanpublishing.com>  
Sent: Wednesday, January 01, 2003 5:28 PM  
Subject: ASL: OVHS: riddle me this, Batman  
> Hi,  
> > A Ram Kangaroo is carrying a squad, a hs, and a  
6+1. The 6+1 sticks his head up, has his helmet  
creased, and breaks. RR8: "The passengers of a Ram  
Kangaroo must all unload at the same time." How  
can the Kangaroo unload? Points awarded for cre-  
ativity.  
So long, JR

Jump real high and let them fall out of the pouch.  
Gravity will do the rest.  
Phlegm  
Tie me Kangaroo down sport, tie me Kangaroo  
down! There a dangerous breed sport, so tie me Kan-  
garoo down -----

---

Ron Moser says "Who indeed is the "CH toady"  
Toedwy toedwy--the man with no Game---and a real  
dorky sign-on name--- " Bahaha, I read this and the  
water I was drinking shot through my nose. I think  
you failed miserably on your Morale Check. Possible  
reduction of your Experience Level Rating as well  
from your retort. Tater says "...toads" is more like  
it...or "toady's". You should spend more time design-  
ing for CH so that the RaT can turn you submissions  
into \_crayola crap\_." Actually Tater and Mr. R.  
Moser, Toedwy has a meaningful acronym, especially  
to me. A U.S Navy one at that. I will give you a clue  
ole Tater, "The Cowards never started and the weak  
died along the way". Anyone else care to decipher  
the acronym? Please do :)

*(Continued from page 3)*

the newsletter with historical material scratched up  
from the internut to make up for people's inability to  
contribute. The newsletter will stand or fall on its  
own two feet. Or more to the point, get thinner or  
phatter, since there will always be a RoF, even if it is  
only eight pages long with one article.

But 20-24 pages long with four or five articles would  
be even better, I think we can all agree. So what do  
we need to do to get here? Simple - what we need is  
7 or 8 bearz to write a 2, 3 or 4 page article once a  
year. Richard is already the RoF product reviewer  
and more than meets his quota. So what about  
everyone else?

If you run a tournament, you should write a  
tournament report. No ifs, no buts, no maybes.  
Think of it as part of the contract when you agree to  
run it.

If you design a scenario, do some designer's notes.  
Always interesting, always useful. Especially if it is  
a tournament scenario, you can write about how it  
played out and any balance issues.

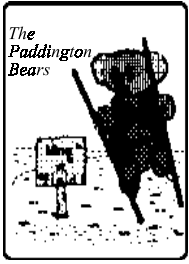
If you play a CG, write an AAR We have seen a  
number of these, and people like them. More, more!

In the end, you can write about whatever you want.  
All it needs is everyone to write one article every year  
or two, and we're set. But we need that foundation,  
for without it no amount of guest articles and filler I  
can scrounge up will compensate. So, over to you -  
all of you. Remember,

***reason + no result = no result.***

Cheers,

The Captain.



## **Bear Meeting Dates for 2003**

	<b>1st November</b>
<b>4th January</b>	
	<b>6th December</b>
<b>1st February</b>	
	<b>Tournament Dates (approximate only)</b>
<b>3rd March</b>	
	<b>CANCON</b>
<b>5th April</b>	<b>25-27 January</b>
<b>3rd May</b>	
	<b>ANZACON</b>
<b>5th July</b>	<b>25-27 April</b>
<b>2nd August</b>	
	<b>SAGA</b>
<b>6th September</b>	<b>7-9 June</b>
	<b>OctoBear</b>
<b>4th October</b>	<b>11-12 October</b>